

36.11.432 GRIZZLY BEAR MANAGEMENT ON BLOCKED LANDS

(1) The department shall adhere to the following when conducting forest management activities on blocked Stillwater unit lands (Stillwater and Coal Creek state forests) within the Northern Continental Divide ecosystem (NCDE):

(a) Use BMU and BMU sub-units for analysis purposes where applicable.

(b) Conduct road density estimates using standardized techniques accepted by the interagency grizzly bear committee, NCDE subcommittee, or other techniques approved by the forest management bureau chief.

(c) Design projects to result in no net increase in the proportion of each BMU sub-unit (trust lands only) that exceeds an open road density of one mile per square mile from baseline levels calculated in 1996.

(i) In the event a road is encountered that is not in the existing baseline, and evidence suggests the road existed prior to 1996, the road would be added to the 1996 baseline data and revised baseline levels would be calculated. This shall apply only during the non-denning period.

(ii) The department may allow temporary increases in road density above 1996 baseline levels for each BMU sub-unit upon approval by the forest management bureau chief. In such situations, the department shall apply alternative methods to minimize impacts on grizzly bears to the maximum extent practicable.

(d) Design projects to result in no net decrease from baseline levels calculated in 1996 in the proportion of each BMU sub-unit (trust lands only) designated as security core. The department shall map security core areas. Security core areas shall remain intact for periods approximating 10 years, to the extent practicable.

(i) The department may allow temporary decreases in security core below 1996 baseline levels for each BMU sub-unit upon approval by the forest management bureau chief. In such situations, the department shall apply alternative methods to minimize the impacts on grizzly bears to the maximum extent practicable.

(e) For project-related activities that would occur within or immediately adjacent to security core areas, make efforts to conduct human activities during the denning period (November 16 to March 31). The department shall construct temporary roads and skid trails to prevent future use by motorized vehicles during the non-denning period after completion of project-related activities.

(f) When conducting project activities in or near identified security core areas during the non-denning period, minimize the duration of air and ground-based harvest activities to the extent practicable, particularly in known areas of seasonal importance for bears.

(i) The department shall make efforts to design helicopter flight routes in a manner that avoids and/or minimizes flight time across security core areas and/or known seasonally secure areas.

(ii) Where practicable, the department shall design flight paths to occur greater than one mile from potentially affected core areas or areas of known seasonal importance.

(g) Where procedures are lacking and to the extent practicable, use published information, professional judgment, and available technology to locate and provide for secure areas of known seasonal importance for displaced bears where displacement risk is deemed high. Where feasible, the department may expand security core areas with additional buffers and/or temporary road restrictions to reduce temporary losses of effective security core area.

(h) Calculate total road density for analysis purposes and make efforts to reduce total road density to the extent practicable.

(i) Consider seasonal closures and activity restrictions for mitigating proposed actions.

(j) Monitor road closures annually for effectiveness and make necessary repairs within one operating season.

(k) Retain no less than 40% of any BMU sub-unit (trust lands only) in hiding cover. In situations beyond department control where disturbances may temporarily reduce hiding cover within a BMU sub-unit, the department shall make efforts to minimize further reductions of hiding cover.

(l) To provide additional security for grizzly bears, retain cover that provides visual screening adjacent to open roads, where practicable.

(m) Prohibit contractors and purchasers conducting contract operations from carrying firearms while operating. (History: 77-1-202, 77-1-209, 77-5-201, 77-5-204, MCA; IMP, 77-5-116, 77-5-204, 77-5-206, 77-5-207, MCA; NEW, 2003 MAR p. 397, Eff. 3/14/03.)